Arboreta and Botanic Gardens

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Arboretum Library
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Arcadia, CA 91007
626-821-3213

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Tram returns to South Coast in 1991

For the first time in five years visitors will be able to tour South Coast Botanic Garden by tram starting in early 1991. Motorized tours of the gardens were discontinued when budget cuts ruled out repairs on deteriorating roadways and obsolete equipment.

Early in 1990, the Norris Foundation and the South Coast Botanic Garden Foundation supplied matching funds to purchase a $100,000 tram.

While the tram was being built, work continued within the garden preparing the way for tours. Pruning roadside trees and building a new boarding area will provide enough space to accommodate the 60-passenger vehicle. Garden roadways damaged when underlying landfill material decayed have already been repaired by the Los Angeles County Sanitation Department.

The new tram, accessible to handicapped visitors, will transport passengers on a half-hour tour of the 87 acre garden. During the narrated tour visitors can see most of the garden's highlights including a small fresh-water lake and 1,000 foot stream that provide shelter for about 200 species of birds.

The Norris Foundation and South Coast Botanic Garden Foundation purchased tram.

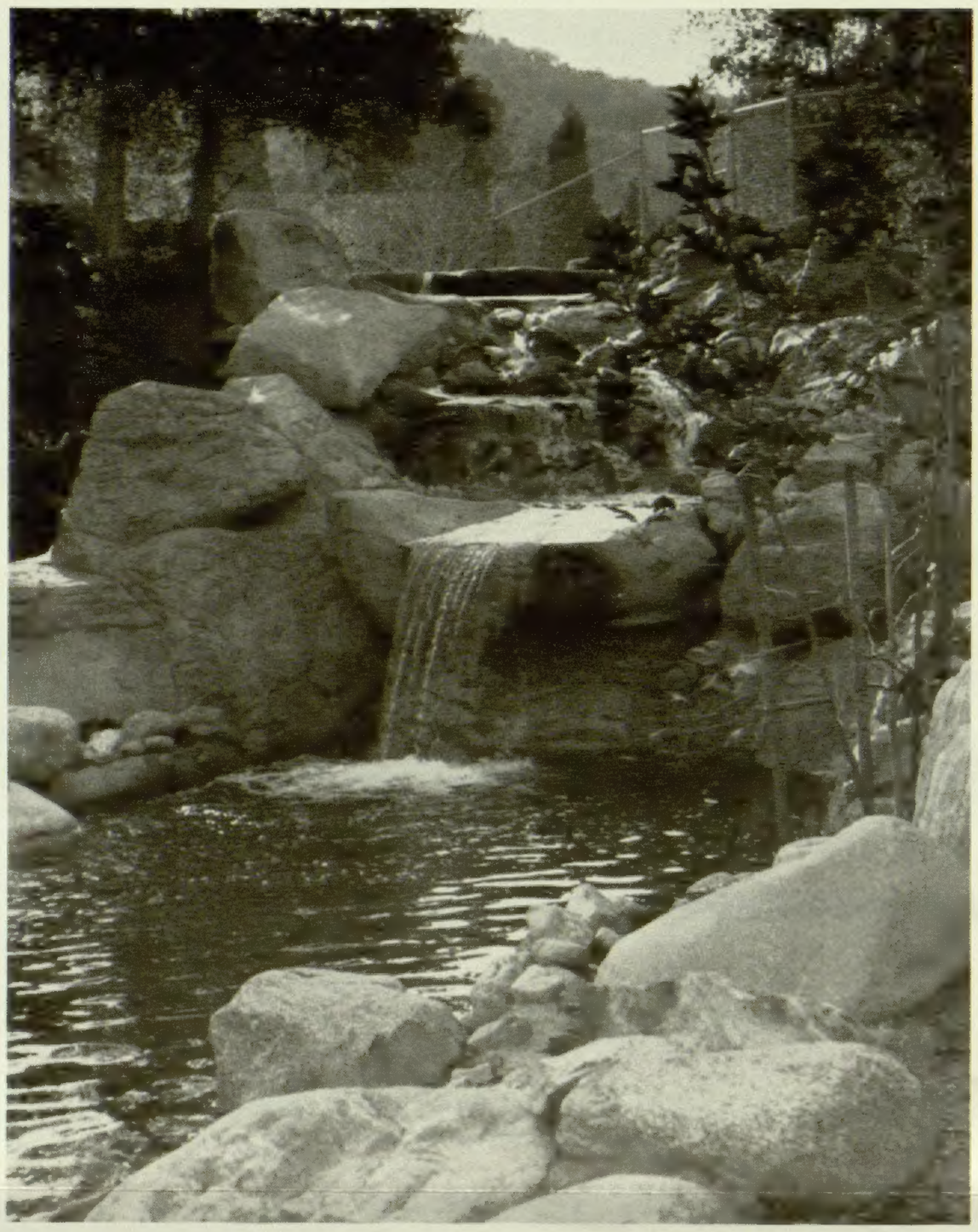
Lake dedication scheduled at Descanso Gardens

Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich will be an honored guest at a ceremony Jan. 28 dedicating Descanso Gardens' newly completed lake renovation project. Other guests scheduled to attend are Descanso Gardens Guild president Gail Boatwright, Descanso Gardens Guild members, Department Acting Director Leon Arnold, La Canada Flintridge city officials and representatives from the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society.

A reception in the lakehouse hosted by the Descanso Gardens Guild will follow the 11 a.m. ceremony. Fifth and sixth grade students from La Canada Elementary School will provide musical entertainment.

The Guild supplied $284,000, Los Angeles County contributed $70,000 and the Audubon Society gave $3,500 for the renovation. Two Guild members, Nancy Dunn and Bill Beggs, donated considerable time and effort as co-chairmen of the project. Mr. Beggs was also project coordinator.

Started last May, the $350,000 project joins



Native stone incorporated into the manmade waterfall enhances its natural look.

A view of the lake shimmers behind Dr. Steve Cohan as he stands on the new observation deck.

two ponds into a 1.5 acre lake with a protected nesting island for the hundreds of migratory birds that stop at the bird sanctuary. A new observation deck provides a panoramic overlook, and a new footpath winds around the lake for those who prefer a closer view.

A landscape of native plants, tule reeds and some Australian plants was planned to provide shelter and food for nesting birds. Grasses and wildflowers were hydroseeded on some of the steeper banks as a feast for both the eyes of visitors and the stomachs of birds. The flowers will begin blooming soon and continue through the spring.

A private donation of 100 baby koi and water hyacinths add color to the pond formed at the base of the new waterfall.

Arboretum wins productivity award

For the fifth time in five years, a Department project has been recognized as one of the 25 most productive new programs in Los Angeles County. The annual Productivity and Quality Award program was established by the Productivity Commission in 1985 to publicize creative, innovative ideas being put into practice by County departments. Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich presented the award at a luncheon on Oct. 30.

The Department was honored for a new system at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum that reduces green waste generated by garden operations while saving manpower, fertilizer and water. The benefits are based upon the use of a new shredder donated by the California Arboretum Foundation.

The shredder, unlike the old brush chipper, can process all plant material—including stringy bamboo stems and palm fronds—into particles small enough to be spread as mulch. This improved method of dealing with trimmed vegetation has cut waste disposal costs almost in half.

Because it is more compact, the shredder can be operated safely by one man and can be towed anywhere on the grounds to pulverize trimmings while simultaneously mulching the surrounding area. The mulch retains moisture in the soil, reducing water use by about 10 percent. As it decays, the mulch enriches the soil and reduces fertilizer use.

The shredder cost about $8,000 and is expected to save enough to justify the Foundation's investment within 18 months.

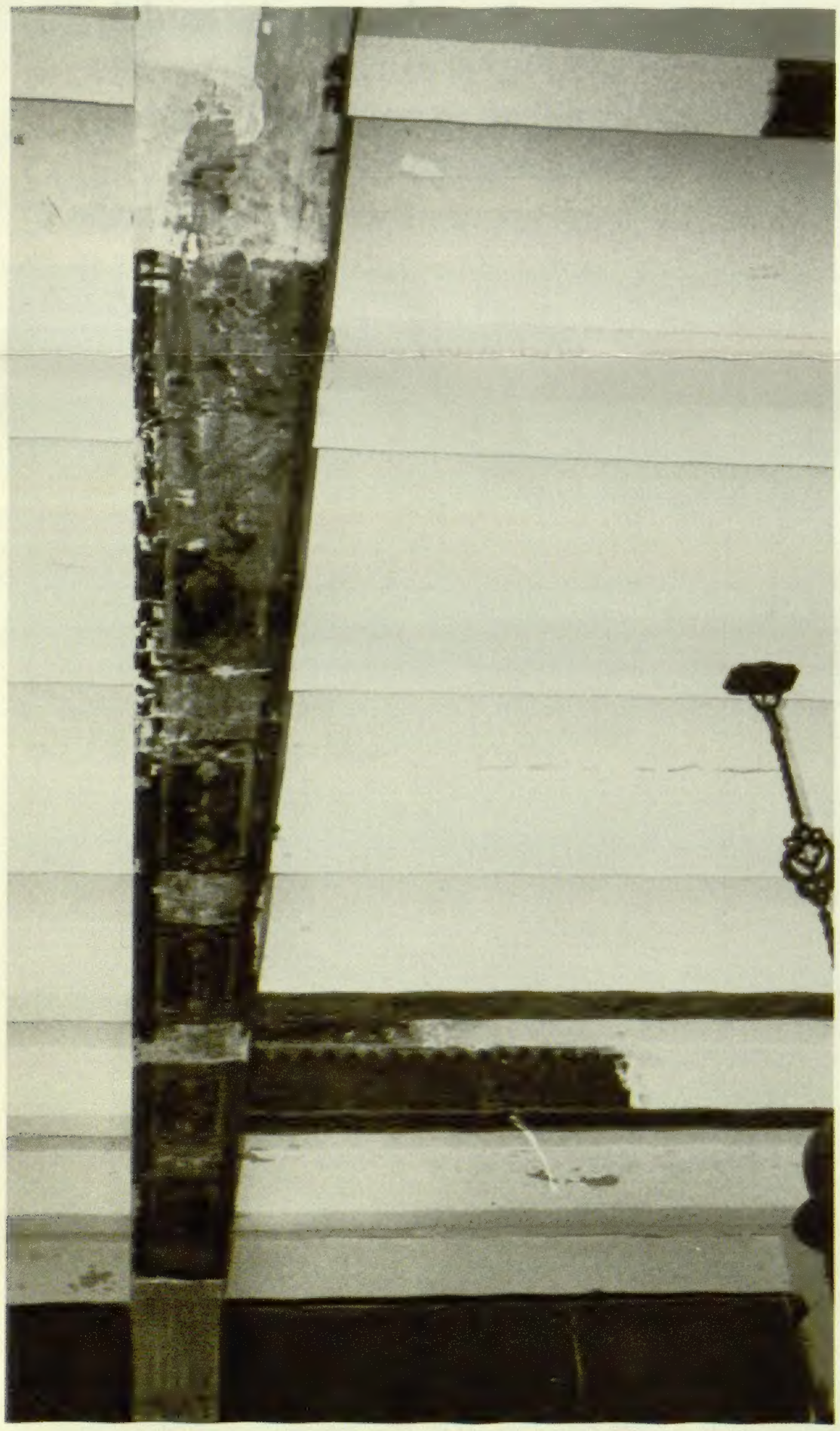
Acting Director Leon Arnold holds the Productivity and Quality Award the Department received for a new method of reducing green waste.

Third restoration phase begins at Robinson Gardens

The Friends of Robinson Gardens will soon begin the third phase in their long-term restoration program. Bids on the two separate projects have been accepted, with the Friends and County grant funds each providing half of the $94,000 needed.

The first project involves restoring the stenciled ceiling beams in the poolhouse. Architectural conservator J. Ronald Reed will remove latex paint applied to the beams in the 1950s, exposing the design of foliage and flowers that decorated the poolhouse when it was built in 1924. Damaged portions of the stenciling, first revealed years ago when the paint began peeling, will then be recreated to museum quality and the ceiling protected by a glaze.

Crumbling balustrade posts will be recast.



After the paint is stripped away, the stenciled design will be restored and protected with glaze.

The second project will be completion of the balustrade restoration around the main residence that has been going on for several years. These balustrade units, typical of Italianate architecture, were installed in 1924 to separate the main lawn and lilypond from the swimming pool. Roots of oleander shrubs planted nearby disrupted the foundation of the cast concrete posts and railings, leaving them in dangerous condition.

David D. Charlebois, a concrete and stone restoration expert, plans to recast and relay the foundation, then reassemble the entire unit, installing new pins to strengthen it.

The first phase of the restoration program was completed in 1988-89 at a cost of about $178,000. Of that total, the Friends contributed about $68,000, matched by a State Community Parklands grant of $59,200 and a $50,000 matching grant from the County.

The second phase of restoration, costing $175,000, was funded by a donation of $110,000 from the Friends and a $65,000 County matching grant.

Clothes swap organized at Arboretum

Executive secretary Charlette Larson (left) and historian Sandra Snider pack clothes for charity. The 75 dresses, skirts and blouses are the residue of a clothing swap the women organized at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum in early December.

"It all started when Sandy and I were talking about how everyone has clothes in their closets they never wear but that are too good to throw away," says Char. The seminar room looked like the garment district for a week while the staff brought in cast-offs and exchanged them for "new" apparel.

Eventually the unclaimed articles will be distributed in Mexico by the Kiwanis Club to which Patty Mannatt, special events coordinator, belongs.

Environmental Education Fair expands

Two new contributors have added extra dimension to the annual Environmental Education Fair scheduled for Mar. 16 at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum. Beginning at 9 a.m. Saturday, the fair activities continue until 4 p.m.

This year the Oak Tree Foundation and Caltrans joined the 15 organizations that, for the past 10 years, have orchestrated an annual forum of environmental resources. Nature games, field trips led by Las Voluntarias docents, and hands-on projects by 65 exhibitors make the fair entertaining as well as educational.

The Oak Tree Foundation supplied $4,500 for a "Green City" grant program that awards up to five trees each to classes or youth groups who submit a plan for planting and caring for the trees. Although the proposals aren't due until Jan. 31, the number of calls received at the Arboretum indicate a lot of interest.

Caltrans will use their experience in traffic control to ease the parking problems that have increased as attendance edges up beyond 5,000 people for the one-day fair. A fleet of LA County Transportation Commission vans will shuttle visitors from parking lots at Santa Anita Fashion Park, demonstrating the advantages of ride sharing.

The first Environmental Education Fair in 1980 was the inaugural event in the then-new Ayres Hall of Environmental Education. Now the fair has grown to also fill the adjoining ramadas, the lawn and a tent, proof that the environmental movement has healthy roots at the Arboretum.

Reorganizing plant collections

The living plant collections at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum offer a unique educational asset to the community. Currently, the bulk of the collections is organized on the basis of broad geographic affinities. Plants from five regions of the world are assembled in discrete collections: Australia, South Africa, eastern Asia and eastern North America (whose similar plants are remnants of a single ancient flora that once dominated the northern hemisphere), the Mediterranean region, and southwestern North America.

The composition of each collection is based on a number of factors, including ease and frequency of cultivation in Southern California, prominence in a region's native flora, ornamental characteristics, and, of course, availability.

Continued development and adherence to the designated theme of the geographic theme is critical to maintaining the Arboretum's unique contribution to the region's botanic garden community. Now that the Arboretum has accomplished its initial goal of acquiring and displaying a wider variety of exotic plants for Southern California through these collections, a potential future consideration will be the refinement and reorganization of these collections in a manner that enhances their display and educational values.

*Although all are from Australia, the grass-tree (*Xanthorrhea quadrangulata*) in the background, the bull mallee tree (*Eucalyptus behriana*) and the flax lily (*Dianella sp.*) occupy disparate plant communities in their homeland.*

FUTURE RENOVATIONS

The main emphasis of this reorganization is to improve the quality and continuity of horticultural displays and interpretation, using a thematic approach that is repeated throughout the collections. A reorganization that would make it easier to develop a stronger horticultural interpretation can be logically based on an articulation of the vastly different habitat and vegetation types that exist within the broad regions represented by each collection.

This can be accomplished by grouping plants with their natural associates whose common hereditary adaptations to the same habitat (climate, rainfall patterns, soils, etc.) translate into similar cultural requirements in the garden.

Until now, there has been no clear organizational scheme for how the plants are grouped or displayed within each regional collection. This is often the case in the early stages of an arboretum's development, when the emphasis is on the acquisition of a diverse array of plants, filling in an initially austere landscape with whatever is most expedient.

In the Australian plant collection, for example, plants from the wet temperate forest, the dry temperate forest, the moist subtropical forest, and the semi-desert outback are all mixed together in a random fashion. A similar mix occurs in the African plant collection, where African plants from the winter rainfall areas of the Cape, the moist subtropical eastern coastal forests which receive rain in the

could enhance educational value

summer, the inland grasslands, and the semi-desert of the west are also randomly planted among one another.

Both of these collections have achieved a commendable level of general diversity, and are often aesthetically appealing. However, they have yet to fulfill their educational potential. By renovating the collections in a way that illustrates the unifying principles of horticulture and plant biology, the educational value of the collections as living classrooms would be greatly enhanced.

IMPROVED INTERPRETATION

The development of interpretive materials and programs must be a part of the renovation planning process from the beginning. Well designed maps, for which there are corresponding landmarks which are easily located throughout the grounds, should be made available. Visitors who come to the Arboretum with a specific interest, as well as the uninitiated walk-in, need better direction than the current map provides.

In addition to maps, self-guided tour pamphlets should be developed to direct visitors through specific points of interest. For example, "Outstanding Plants for the Small Landscape" is a popular area of interest in which an interpretive pamphlet could give valuable information in addition to directing interested visitors to appropriate specimens in the garden. The pamphlet should be developed in concert with a system of pathways which take visitors through the collections, with aspects that optimize the many beautiful vistas inherent to the garden, as well as providing the best view of individual plantings.

For each regional collection, central interpretive areas should be installed to explain to the public the different vegetation types within the region, elaborating on the influence of climate, moisture, and soils. These interpretive centers should be landscaped to highlight that region's plants which are prominent in Southern California horticulture.

Another potential area of interest that should be a part of the planned collection renovation is a display of economically important plants from each of the geographic regions, with well documented interpretation regarding how they have impacted civilization, agriculture, and commerce throughout their history. In the case of economically important plants that aren't appropriate for display, information should nevertheless be included in the interpretation of the vegetation type in which they originated.

In addition, the collection-specific interpretive materials can discuss how people have historically adapted to living in the different vegetation zones of each region, and develop lessons which compare distant, but similar regions around the world. In this way, the collections can become a considerable educational asset to the community.

Repeating this framework throughout the collections would enable teachers to use the educational theme when they visit with their classes. Interpretive materials, when distributed to the schools, could preview the educational components of the collections for teachers, encouraging them to structure their presentation along the repetitive themes of habitat factors that occur in each of the collections.

These are some of the ways in which the Arboretum hopes to enlarge its service to the community in the coming years.

The author, Allen Howard, is a biologist with the Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens.

"Festival of Spring Flowers" to bloom

"A Festival of Spring Flowers" will bring a month-long rainbow of color and gardening lessons to Descanso Gardens. From Mar. 23 through April 21, more than 30,000 spring-flowering bulbs and annuals will complement the natural beauty of the garden's oak grove and camellia forest. Daffodils, tulips, anemones, azaleas and flowering trees will line walkways and peep out from shady model gardens. The festival is open every day from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Mar. 23-April 21.

Educational aspects of the show will not be lost among the floral displays, according to garden superintendent, Dr. Steve Cohan.

"The 20,000 tulips and 13,000 other assorted spring bulbs will all be identified by cultivar. If you see flowers that are particularly appealing, you can read the signs and know what to order next fall," Dr. Cohan says.

Free, one-hour horticultural lectures every Tuesday and Thursday at 2 p.m. will feature experts discussing many different horticultural topics.

Longer, low-cost gardening demonstrations will be held the first two Saturdays in April. On April 6, camellia pruning will be illustrated from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the camellia forest. A demonstration of plant budding techniques will run the same day from 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. On April 13, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Dr. Cohan will talk about plants for a water conserving landscape. Fee for each symposium is $10 with a 50 percent discount for Descanso Guild members.

Bunnies to visit Festival

The mythical Easter Bunny and his real-life relatives will pay a daytime visit to Descanso Gardens on Mar. 30. He will also stage a half-hour long Easter egg hunt for the first 200 children under six years of age who arrive before the 10 a.m. starting time. Posing with every child who wants a photograph taken with him will keep him busy until a family brunch begins at 11 a.m.

The brunch—with menu, price and reservation procedures yet to be announced—will be open to everyone. After the leisurely meal concludes at 1 p.m., there will still be plenty of time to take in the "Festival of Spring Flowers" displays and visit some real bunnies.

A warren of rabbits will hop around on a protected area of the lawn courtesy of the House Rabbit Society, an organization of gentle souls who rescue abused or abandoned bunnies. Members will also be there to talk about these endearing pets and explain rabbit care to prospective owners.

Musical history of Queen Anne Cottage studied

E. J. "Lucky" Baldwin was quite fond of music—he reportedly owned 12 pianos at one time—and showed it by featuring a cherubic orchestra in stained glass at the entrance to the Queen Anne Cottage. Despite the prominence of the panel directly above the portrait of Jenny Dexter in the front door, it escaped scholarly attention until last fall.

On a casual tour of the Arboretum in September, musicologist Dr. Albert R. Rice, curator of the Kenneth G. Fiske Museum at the Claremont University Center, noticed both the stained glass panel and the vintage musical instruments in the Cottage. After a discussion with historian Sandra Snider he began researching the musical background of the Cottage.

First he sorted out the nine instruments in the stained glass panel. The saxophone in the center, a violin and the triangle in the hand of the cherub on the left are easy to identify. But less obvious are a clarinet and the bell one busy cherub rings while he blows on the elongated natural (valveless) trumpet. Except for its oversized bell, a valve trumpet in the right foreground looks much like its modern counterpart. An old fashioned mellophone or tenor horn is the brass instrument to the left of the saxophone, and the center cherub wields a conductor's baton.

Dr. Rice revealed some interesting facts when he turned his attention to the real instruments—harp, melodeon and piano—in the music room.

The harp, donated by Milo Rowell in 1968, was made by the Erard Company in France about 1850, according to Dr. Rice, and is of museum quality. "Your instrument clearly resembles Erard's 'Gothic' model of 1858 in the Victoria and Albert Museum," he continues. The harp's double action pedal mechanism was one of the many innovations developed late in the 18th Century by company founder, Sebastien Erard.

The square grand piano with a rosewood case was donated to the Arboretum by Mary Buchard in 1953. Myron A. Decker, who produced pianos with various partners from 1844 until his death in 1901, manufactured this one in New York around 1879.

The melodeon in a rosewood case has ivory and ebony keys like a piano but is actually a variation of the lap organ. It had been in the family of Mrs. Winston Cruse of Bluffton, Ind., until it was donated to the Arboretum in 1956. These small reed instruments were very popular in the last half of the 19th Century. By 1890 one manufacturer, Lyon & Healy, had produced a total of about 100,000 melodeons, and Sears was selling about 15,000 annually.

Dr. Rice plans to submit photographs and an article about the Queen Anne Cottage and Lucky Baldwin to the *Newsletter of the American Musical Instrument Society*.

Volunteers preserve Aplin photo collection

For more than 40 years Bill Aplin's crystalline nature photographs appeared in publications as diverse as Sunset magazine, Ortho gardening books and travel magazines. Now the Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens has acquired his entire collection of plant and landscape photos.

In March, 1989, thousands of photographs in four-drawer file cabinets and cardboard boxes were moved into the Research Building at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum. Nancy Escher, a Beverly Hills artwork appraiser, inventoried the collection. Ms. Escher has judged the value of several other collections including the renowed Security Pacific Bank photographs that were recently donated to the Los Angeles Public Library.

After the appraisal the photographs, some dating back to 1948, had to be cataloged, cleaned and protected. Mr. Aplin had indexed most of the color slides and black and white images numerically in two major files. But over the years as the photographs were returned after publication, many had been misfiled, and some had never been labeled at all.

The task of bringing order to the collection has been assumed by volunteer Ken Quigley and a staff of six fellow film enthusiasts from Las Vols. A published photographer in his own right, Ken has been chronicling plants and events at the Arboretum for several years.

During that time he repeatedly talked to Special Services Chief, Tak Niiya, about the necessity of compiling a photo file of plants on the grounds. So when the Arboretum acquired the Aplin collection, Mr. Niiya knew just the man to organize the photos that include so many plants from the garden.

Ken recalls, "Tak said 'I have a job for you.'" Thus launching him into a project that will take about 70 or 80 hours every month for years.

Volunteers (from left) *Carol Libby, Hal Libby, Ken Quigley, Mitzi Gilmartin and Barbara Heck clean and file photographs every Tuesday morning. As the volunteers work their way through the stacks of boxes in the background, they file the photographs in computer-indexed folders that hang in steel cabinets.*

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Each Tuesday morning Ken and three or four volunteers don white gloves and start work. Another crew of three comes in for the afternoon shift.

Sand and salty air that infiltrated the original folders while they were stored at Mr. Aplin's beach house has to be blown off by compressed air. Then the slides are sorted and transferred to polypropylene holders. Black and white photographs will be stored in acid-free envelopes.

"The old plastic pages often stuck to the slides," Ken says. "These new archival holders are as safe as you can make them for storage." All the color slides have now been indexed and the index entered into a computer program established by Dr. Daryl Koutnik, a staff biologist.

Volunteers working on the index must also decipher Mr. Aplin's sometimes cryptic handwriting and verify botanical names. With imagination, perseverance and the help of the research staff, his notes about the photos have been recorded.

The stunning quality of the photos has inspired dedication that borders on obsession among the volunteers.

"These people never take a break," Ken says. "Then I have to remind them to go home to make room for the next group." But they don't have to worry about running out of work soon. Scores of boxes filled with unsorted material are still stacked almost to the ceiling and will take at least another four years to process.

Robinson Gardens hosts party for special children

The Friends of Robinson Gardens arranged an early visit from Santa Claus to the delight of 45 children from the ERAS Center for Special Education. On Dec. 5 the children, ranging in age from 5 to 15 years, enjoyed a party complete with lunch, a singing clown and his guitar-playing accompanist, a mime and a puppet show.

Star of the show, of course, was Santa, who arrived with bags of presents. When each child sat on Santa's lap, he or she received toys from Disneyland, a photograph from television personality Fred Savage, and sox from the Los Angeles Dodgers. Topping everything off were more toys and sweatshirts contributed by the Friends.

Banners flutter as clown leads children in a sing-along.

The party, arranged by co-chairman Susan Genter and Jan Billings, continues a tradition established by Virginia Robinson. This year the guests were from the ERAS Center, a school that teaches ordinary living skills to mentally disabled children.

GARDEN EVENTS

Jan. 19 — **Camellia Seminar**
Descanso Gardens
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Demonstrations on camellia grafting, hybridizing, etc.
Call to register, fee $35

Jan. 26-27 — **Bonsai Show**
Arboretum
9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
California Bonsai Society features tiny deciduous trees
Demos at 1 & 3 p.m.

Feb. 9-10 — **African Violet Show**
South Coast Botanic Garden
Sat. 10 am-4 pm, Sun. 9 am-4 pm
South Coast African Violet Society
150 types to see & buy—including pinwheels, trailers & micro-minis

Pruning demonstrations at the Gardens

Jan. 6 — 11 a.m. & 2 p.m.
Roses with South Coast Rose Society
at South Coast Botanic Garden

Jan. 12 — 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Roses with Garden staff
at Descanso Gardens

Jan. 13 — 2 p.m.
Fruit trees with Dr. Jean Natter
at South Coast Botanic Garden

Feb. 3 — 2 p.m.
Fuchsias with Ida Drapkin
at South Coast Botanic Garden

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Los Angeles State & County Arboretum
301 North Baldwin Avenue
Arcadia, CA 91007-2697

Descanso Gardens
1418 Descanso Drive
La Canada Flintridge, CA 91011

South Coast Botanic Garden
26300 Crenshaw Blvd.
Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90274

Virginia Robinson Gardens
Beverly Hills, CA 90210

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